

Sermon, April 16, 2023
Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9
“Faithful Followers: Unshaken
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When I was a child, I loved to spend time in the summer, or anytime really, at my grandparents' house. My mother came from a large family, and her siblings were spread out over several years. The result being I had uncles and aunts who were 30 years older than I was and some only four years older than I was.

While my mother came from a larger family, I was an only child. Going to spend time with my grandparents meant being with my uncles and aunts who were only a few years older than I was. More like cousins really than uncles and aunts. The best thing was they were young enough that we could play together, but they were just enough years older than I was to seem cool.

I also loved spending time at my grandparents' house. They had this huge house- large wrap around porch, a ton of rooms to play in. I spent a bit of time there several summers.

At least that's what I had in my mind's eye. As we grew older, we grew apart. There were no issues between us, we all just got busy with our lives and going on our different ways as people do. So I hadn't been to my grandparents' house in maybe twenty years when my grandfather unexpectedly passed away and we gathered at the house.

Have you ever had a place you visited a lot as a child, and you have in your mind's eye what it was like? Your memories that you play over and over, or your perspective can be such that it becomes the reality for you. But then when you go back to reality and your memories don't quite jibe?

That's what I experienced when I got to my grandparents' house. Instead of a larger house, it was a very small house with only a few rooms. In fact, it was so small I wasn't sure we had the right place until I saw my parents' car out front. It didn't take many people in the rooms to get overcrowded. It's the same house it has always been. It's just that time moved on, we all got older, and our perspectives changed.

That's what life does, doesn't it? It moves on. As such, we would like things to stay the same. The fact is that's life, it's ever changing, always shifting. I have a couple of social media sites I frequent. One is about the history of Lancaster and the other about Dayton, the city I grew up closest to. And they are fascinating stories, you get to see how things were twenty, forty, fifty years ago. You see how much has changed and how much has stayed the same. One thing I have noticed, though, is that there is change in every single picture. Nothing stays the same.

I don't know if you ever look at these sites, but if you do, beyond the pictures go down and look at the comments. One of the things you will notice is that there is a sense of angst and melancholy about how much a place has changed. Oh, I remember when, we had so many changes downtown, Oh I loved that restaurant, too bad they closed, I used to meet there with my friends. I remember so and so from the picture. Nostalgia overwhelms us, and we realize how much a place has changed.

But that's life, isn't it? Life is in a constant state of change. Very few of us look the way we did a few years ago. Our homes and communities' change. Our life is in a constant state of flux. In fact, life changes so much that it can almost become discouraging because nothing stays the same no matter how hard we try to keep it that way. We have a longing for something to stay the same, a longing for permanence, yet we are fighting a losing battle.

Let's pause and ponder that for a moment. We live in a world that is constantly changing, constantly shifting from our experiences to our business to our values to our sense of right and wrong. Yet we have a longing for something real. We have a longing for something permanent, we have a longing for consistency that doesn't change, that makes sense out of life, not just today, but forever. We live in a world of change, yet we have a desire in our hearts for something that gives us permanence.

This morning, we are beginning a new series “Faithful Followers”. What does it mean to be faithful followers of Jesus. We are called to be followers of Jesus. That’s what it means to be a disciple, you follow. But we are also called to be faithful. Some of us struggle and stumble as followers of Jesus, we want to go our own way. We want to make our own decisions. The ways Jesus asks us to follow Him into are daunting. Some of us struggle at the idea of being faithful. We are happy to follow Jesus on Sunday. Or in our prayer time. But then we are all too ready to set that aside as we get back into the real world. So over the next few weeks, we will explore what it means to follow Jesus and what it means to be faithful.

Why are we followers of Jesus? Our Psalm and 1 Peter both give us some understanding. The Psalmist says I follow God because in the end, He is the only one who does not change. David discovers that there’s a longing he has in his heart for something he can rely on, something that is permanent, that doesn’t change at the whims of the world, is found only in God. It is a relationship with God that his heart longs for.

David says as I look at people, I find them falling into two categories, those who follow God and find what they long for. They find a God who doesn’t change. A God who will never stop loving them, who will satisfy the desires of their heart over and over again.

On the other hand, I see those who look elsewhere for purpose, elsewhere for something to satisfy their soul. And over and over again, they are unsatisfied. They end up disappointed. Why? Because everything else we make to be a god in our life if it’s not the true God fails us. Because it all changes. Money can’t satisfy you because the wealth you have changes from day to day. And as far as I know, everyone has yet to determine how much of money is needed to truly satisfy. People can’t satisfy you, they change like the rest of the world. Your job can’t fully satisfy you, a relationship will not.

Peter says the same thing. Peter talks about our inheritance. And our inheritance is what? Our satisfying relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter says we all have a choice on what our inheritance ought to be. We all invest in something in life. And if there is one thing, I’ve learned from working with our endowment group here at church. It’s that you need to be careful what you choose to invest in. Because some things look very tempting, promising us riches and happiness only to disappoint in the end.

Peter warns us not to invest, not to give our lives to what might seem like it can offer us riches, joy, and satisfaction, but in the end fall by the wayside. Peter says we have an inheritance that is richer than gold. What is it? The love of God that never changed. The love and presence of a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Values that don’t have to shift with the tide of popular or public opinion. A God who will never leave or forsake us.

Why, then, ought we be faithful followers of Jesus? Because it is then that we can find ourselves unshaken, unmoved by the always changing winds of life. The Psalmist says the Lord is my refuge. No matter how

much life changes or life throws at me, I can find refuge in the arms of God. He will lead us through and save us in the midst of the storms. I want to be a follower of Jesus because I'm tired of following things that let me down, things that promise to make me happy and yet in the end change and disappoint like everything else. I want to follow a God who loves me. Who says I can always rest on Him, who is always Good. That's who I want to follow. What about you? Who are you following? Are you unshaken?

I want to be a faithful follower, as well. Not just on Sunday. Not just when it's easy. Not just when I can see where He is leading me and that's where I want to go. I want to follow Him because He has never let me down. Because my life is always better when I follow Him. I can't stop the storms in life, but I can find refuge in the one who will not fail me. What about you, will you be unshaken? Amen.